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C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 000160

EMBASSY ROME FOR TSA ANTHONY GIOVANNIELLO
DEPARTMENT FOR EEB/TRA KRISTIN GUSTAVSON, BRIAN SILER, AND
TERRI ROBL
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PASS TO SUSAN MCDERMOTT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/13/2019

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SUBJECT: MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION DOES A ONE-EIGHTY ON
DELTA AND THE EU BAN

REF: A. LUANDA 68 B. LUANDA 38 C. LUANDA 107

Classified By: Ambassador Dan Mozena for Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: During a March 11 meeting with Ambassador Mozena, Minister of Transport Augusto de Silva Tomas de-linked Delta's request to begin service in Angola (ref A) from a deal involving TAAG flights to the U.S., reversing his previous stance as communicated to Embassy and Delta officials. In stark contrast to the Ambassador's January 13 meeting (ref B), the Minister now appears to realize that the Angolan CAA's (INAVIC) and TAAG's EU blacklisting are serious technical and regulatory problems that cannot be solved by political expedient. The Minister requested information on everything Angola must do to get Luanda Airport FAA approved, and TAAG approved to fly to the U.S. Ambassador Mozena responded to the Minister's requests by outlining six concrete steps that the U.S. and Angola could take to achieve our two mutual, but separate, goals. END SUMMARY

12. (C) During his March 11 meeting with Ambassador Mozena, Minister Tomas presented a much more pragmatic view of both Delta's request to begin service to Angola and the EU ban on all Angolan airlines, than expressed during their January 13 meeting. The Minister no longer explicitly linked Delta's authorization to begin air operations to Angola with a quid pro quo for TAAG. Instead, he stated it was GRA law to first have a government to government civil aviation agreement, but that he had already instructed INAVIC to begin preliminary contacts with Delta on what it had to do to gain authorization to fly into Angola. He was surprised and visibly irritated to learn from Ambassador Mozena that, after repeated requests by the embassy, INAVIC still had not provided any information to Delta or the Embassy on how a foreign airline could apply for authorization to operate in Angola. Tomas stated that he would contact INAVIC to see that all information on GRA regulations and laws were forwarded to the Embassy and Delta. He went on to say that receiving Delta is an honor for the Angolan people, and that the two countries "should work directly without intermediaries since this just makes thing expensive." He affirmed President Dos Santos's vision of normalized air transport between the U.S. and Angola. He requested that the Ambassador assist the GRA in obtaining information on all that Angola must do to get TAAG into the U.S. market and Luanda's 4 de Fevereiro Airport FAA certified. He inquired about the possibility of sending Angolan airport officials to the U.S. for training on security issues. He asked for the Ambassador's support to establish exchanges of aviation officials and in understanding the necessary rules, equipment, and procedures required by the U.S. since the issue "involved several USG agencies."

13. (C) Ambassador Mozena responded to the Minister's requests

with six concrete steps that could be taken to help both countries achieve their aviation goals:

--GRA could invite TSA to come to Luanda and do a security survey of Luanda's 4 de Fevereiro Airport to identify what needed to be done to satisfy at least the security aspects for U.S. authorization.

--The Ambassador informed the Minister that TSA had a new security assistance pilot program (ASSIST) that would provide for a more robust security assessment of 4 de Fevereiro airport. The Ambassador stated that he would request that TSA consider Angola for this pilot program when he meets with TSA officials in Washington in April.

--The Ambassador proposed that officials from the Transport Ministry, INAVIC, TAAG, and the Angolan National Airport Authority (ENANA) go to the April DOT/FAA/TSA/ICAO organized conference on African Aviation Operations to the United States in Dakar to learn, step by step, everything the GRA needed to know to begin air operations to the U.S.

--Ambassador extended an invitation to the Minister to attend a USTDA sponsored Partners in Aviation Conference in Cape Town to meet U.S. aviation industry officials to discuss broader aviation issues. T

--The Ambassador recommended Tomas stop in Washington after his trip to Montreal in April, and pledged to set up meetings for the Minister with U.S. aviation officials.

--The Ambassador suggested that the Minister forward to the Embassy a template of a basic GRA aviation agreement for discussion during his visit to Washington.

Tomas, who clearly was not expecting such concrete responses to his requests, acknowledged and agreed with the Ambassador's various proposals, declaring that Angola would attend both the Cape Town and Dakar conferences, would provide a template of a civil aviation agreement, would engage with the Embassy about possible calls for him to make in Washington, and would explore options for taking advantage of TSA expertise. He thanked the Ambassador for "taking these very important steps" and believed that these would "radically change" the U.S.-Angola aviation relationship.

14. (C) Minister Tomas was less dismissive of the EU ban than he was previously, nevertheless, he said he expected TAAG to be certified by INAVIC by the end of the month (NOTE: INAVIC has been issuing air-worthiness waivers for TAAG for the last year. TAAG certification by INAVIC, in and of itself, will not assuage the EU.) He stated that South African Airways was now working with TAAG, and a team of EU auditors was helping INAVIC prepare for a voluntary audit by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in April, as well as an audit by ICAO in May. He expressed his hope (not certitude) that with the results of the two audits Angola could petition the EU to lift its ban and then Angola would subsequently look toward the U.S. market.

15. (C) COMMENT: With Delta's plans now seemingly de-linked from TAAG in the eyes of the Minister, prospects are now a bit better that Delta flights to Angola will become a reality. Post suspects that Ambassador Mozena's engagement with President Dos Santos (ref C) on behalf of Delta resulted in the Minister's about face. It is likely that President Dos Santos understood more clearly than the Minister (or perhaps is more invested) that a U.S. carrier could attract more U.S. business to Angola, giving a boost to Angola's economic diversification goals. We should move quickly to take advantage of the Minister's change in attitude here. END COMMENT

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